

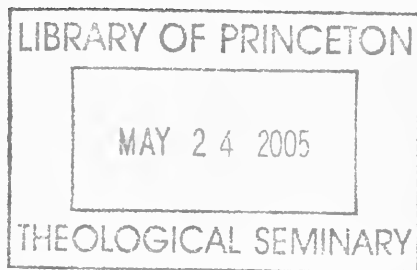


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# SOCIAL CLASSES:

## AN ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

GENERAL UNION PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE,

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA.

July 11th, 1849.

BY

✓  
REV. GEORGE A. COFFEY, A. M.,

A GRADUATE MEMBER.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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DICKINSON COLLEGE, *July 12th*, 1849.

REV. G. A. COFFEY—

DEAR SIR: We have the honor to express to you the thanks of the General Union Philosophical Society for your excellent oration, delivered before them last evening, and earnestly to request a copy for publication.

With great respect,

Your obedient servants,

JOHN WILSON,  
J. W. MARSHALL,  
C. C. TIFFANY,

*Stand. Com. of the G. U. P. S.*

~~~~~  
CARLISLE, *July 12th*, 1849.

GENTLEMEN:—

I have received your note of to-day, requesting, on behalf of the General Union Philosophical Society, a copy of my address of yesterday for publication. As a faithful Union, the approbation of the Society is my sufficient reward. Of course, my speech is at their disposal.

Your most obedient servant,

GEO. A. COFFEY.

JNO. WILSON, J. W. MARSHALL, C. C. TIFFANY,

*Stand. Com. G. U. P. S.*

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## SOCIAL CLASSES.

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FELLOW MEMBERS

OF THE GENERAL UNION PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY:—

WE are gathered here from successive college classes, and years, and generations. The past and the future concentrate in this hour. The occasion awakens, at once, memory and hope. Some of you are about to exchange the retreats sacred to study for the jostling world; to step from the gymnasium into the arena. You are eagerly looking forward. Hope, that most skillful artist of the ideal, composes a future for you more glowing than the figures of Titian, and sunnier than the landscapes of Claude. You fancy yourselves plumed to soar like the falcon when the leash is slipped. Heaven grant that you may realize your hopes; if not the very matter of them, at least their equivalent!

But some of us indulge more pensive feelings. When, after years of absence, we revisit this Eden of a valley, and this Carlisle, a very Damascus in its beauty of place, and linger amid yonder college halls and grounds, the scene of so many studious toils, and merry rambles, of so much enthusiasm and improvement, intervening time disappears; memory enlivens into reality; and old joys and loves come back, like the spirits of the de-

parted, to a mourner, in sweet dreams. Those happy college days! As they recede they brighten.

And, because some of us, brother Unions, are now, for the first time, with you in general meeting, by an obvious association we revert to the past fortunes, and the original institution of our society. Our fraternity is not antediluvian or medieval, but it is sixty years old. And, in this age of steam and telegraphs, of three-day revolutions, and ten-day voyages to Europe, sixty years are something. In that time, we have favored the world with a fair assortment of lawyers, physicians, ministers, warriors, congressmen, governors, ambassadors, secretaries, and an occasional specimen of the author and poet. But, although we have not made much of a noise, yet the outside world has made a great deal. The last sixty years have been the most changeful, crowded, startling, and picturesque period of history. Our society was instituted in 1789. In that year, the American Revolution was consolidated by the definitive adoption of the Federal Constitution. In that year, the Republic began her positive career. She was independent and organized, but inexperienced, in debt, sparsely populated, and alone in the forest. Since then, the thirteen States have spread into thirty, the three millions of people into twenty-two millions; the boundary that lay east of the Mississippi runs far along the Pacific Ocean, and the vast area of prairie, river, and forest, then relieved only by the whoop of the Indian, and the smoke of the emigrant's cabin, is now alive with civilization. The colonies, whose gallant bearing only attracted the sympathies of a few Pulaskis and Lafayettes, and whose successful revolt won a careless and incidental recognition from the kings of Europe, have grown into a gigantic nation, that throws its bright shadow all over this western con-

tinent, and is become a fountain of ideas, and a model of progress to the old world. In the year 1789, began the French Revolution. In that year, Marie Antoinette glittered at Versailles, and Napoleon was a school-boy. In that year, the States-General met, Mirabeau thundered, and the Bastile was demolished. Since then, what events! The Reign of Terror, the roar of Austerlitz, the Emperor and his Marshals, the Iron Duke, and Waterloo, follow each other, the wonders and heroes of a Titanic tragedy. And now, after thirty years of comparative quiet, interrupted only by such incomplete incidents as the Barricades of 1830, and the hapless insurrection in Poland, revolution has burst forth again, and sweeps like a blinding gale over central Europe. The people have risen in great wrath. Thrones are encircling themselves with cannon. Presently, the billowy surface of events will be covered with the wrecks of ancient institutions. Everywhere insurrection is destroying the old, constituent assemblies are modeling the new, and cabinets are plotting reaction. Italy spasmodically struggles against crowns and popes. Germany is reducing her science and speculation to practice; but her sovereigns oppose; and the result is a very chaos of barricades, constitutions, sieges, and concessions. France, though a republic in form, seems menaced by monarchists and communists alike. Revolutionary in her existence, yet, with a Gallic consistency, she ignores revolution elsewhere. Like a bright planet in a cloudy sky, the Hungarian Magyars, the chivalry of Protestantism, are vindicating the renown and the franchises of a thousand years, and their victorious swords are flashing defiance alike at routed Austria and invading Russia. On the

\* Alas! that planet is now in *occultation*.

track of revolution marches war. The Cossacks begin to advance from the East. French armies will, ere long, concentrate on the Alps and the Rhine. It is to be feared that Europe will again become a camp and a battle-field.

The Conservative and Romanticist will attribute these confusions to an over-speculative philosophy, and an infidel theology. The Liberalist hails them as the rough steps of progress. The Democrat exults in them as inaugurating the sovereignty of the people. The Philosopher analyzes them as the outward issue of that conflict of opinion, which increases from controversy to partisanship, and thence to arms. The Historian will treat 1848 and '49 as in connected tissue with the days of July, the rout of Waterloo, the Revolution of 1789, and the oppressions of the middle ages. All these theories are, in some of their aspects, true. Humanity is in progress. That progress involves many innovations; so that, on the one hand, it interferes with the preconceptions of the vassals of tradition, and with such interests as depend on the present status; and, on the other hand, it may be hurried, or misguided by the enthusiasts, who mistake logical abstractions for practical wisdom. Hence, human progress may be either directly opposed, or else brought into accidental conflict with other necessities; and, therefore, it is sometimes unsteady, stormy, and bloody. But though the course of events marches over thrones and barricades alike, and disappoints both legitimists and socialists, yet it is onward and upward.

The present era is the struggle of society to *classify itself more naturally*. Artificial divisions are crumbling, or rending to pieces. The social orders are rushing into a collision that centuries have been engendering. Amid



the crash of revolution and the clang of arms, can be distinguished the remonstrances of stripped Nobilities, the forebodings of the timid "Bourgeoisie," and the wail of insurgent Operatives. The question is between privilege, property, and right. But, although the classes of society will be rearranged, they cannot be done away. All nature is a vast contexture of class embracing class. Genus and species are necessary forms of thought. There are orders in the angelic world. Although men are the same in essence, and equal as to rights, yet they are unequal in physical endowments, talents, and character. Now there is a universal law of moral gravitation. Like attracts like. Therefore, the very same tendencies that organize society will dispose it into classes. These classes, are only different but alike necessary developments, of the same uniting principle whence spring families, nations, and churches. The learned and intellectual, the rich and high-born, the fashionable and polished, the pious and benevolent, the ignorant and rude, the trifling and vicious, because they are unlike in fact and nature, will, therefore, in a community that is naturally organized, always be distinct socially. We need not term them higher or lower ranks. Such terms only embarrass the subject by introducing irrelevant ideas. It is better to speak of *various* classes, or, if the Fourierites will allow, groups or series. Any of these divisions is first in some respects, and inferior in others, according as the standard of comparison is money, birth, manners, mind, or virtue. The Conservative mistakes, not in insisting that there always will be social grades, but in taking for granted that they need artificial aid. The Socialist is right when he would level prescriptive inequalities; it is well to destroy all classes created by law or arbitrary usage. But he forgets that

society will spontaneously classify itself by the elective affinities of its individuals. Indeed, it is possible that classes may be constituted somewhat artificially, and yet the people may be free. Great Britain is the most aristocratic nation in Europe. Yet nowhere is there more civil liberty. A lord may cut a commoner's acquaintance, but he touches his house or person at his own peril. A peasant's vote goes as far as a duke's. The French are for ever chattering about equality, but their liberty is rather a farce.

But society is in its most normal and efficient condition, when its classes, without any tinkering of law, form, improve, dissolve, and re-arrange by the free working of nature, and when every man's place in the scale depends on his own talents and industry. This principle of classification explains at once our own tranquil prosperity, and the convulsions in Europe. When a state usurps nature's office, and tries its own expedients of privilege, monopoly, title, primogeniture, and ceremony, intestine animosities will be fomented, and as soon as the galled and impoverished orders grow strong and intelligent, revolution ensues, with its reactions and wars, until society subsides into a natural condition.

Were men perfect, they would group themselves according to personal and intrinsic distinctions, such as knowledge or goodness. But we are so governed by the objective, that social classes have ever been formed by an extrinsic and tangible standard, which is *property*. And, accordingly, without regarding other or minor divisions, every civilized people may be comprehended under *three* classes.

The first class, called the *aristocratic*, embraces those who are maintained by their possessions, and who, being rich, can live in style without labor. In most ages and

countries, this class have enjoyed exclusive and hereditary privileges. They were the Patricians of Rome, and the Barons of the middle ages; they are the Brahmins and Rajahs of the East, and the Peers of modern Europe. In our own country, as it will be in all others, by the progress of civilization, there is no monopoly of political privilege, and no external badge of aristocracy.

The second class, called the *middle*, is composed of those who are at all dependent on their own exertions. As without labor, either manual or intellectual, they will want, so by labor they are afforded competence, and often independence. Here belong our farmers, and mechanics, and merchants, and learned professions. This class exhibits the most opposite varieties of pursuit, character, and life; it claims rich and poor, gentle and simple, polished and rude. Its extremities are so wide apart, that, in modern times, they blend gradually with the classes lying above and below.

The third class, which might be called the *pauper*, comprises those whose labor does not support them, and who are, therefore, dependent on others. Such are the "proletaires" and "lazzaroni" of European cities, the serfs of Russia and other Slavonic countries, a large part of the peasantry of Ireland, the slaves and most free negroes of our Union, and, indeed, all those unfortunates that drag through life in alleys, and cellars, and fill our courts, and prisons, and almshouses. This class is recruited partly by indolence and vice, and largely by the culpable negligence of society.

If the first of these classes be the gilded ornament of society, and the last its deformity and sore, the middle one is its strength and its hope. For the condition of the middle classes, much more than that of the others, is favorable to developing all the energies, and thereby

all the excellences of human nature. Labor is the condition of all progress, whether material, intellectual, or moral, whether individual or social.

Now, the first class is raised above the necessity of laboring. Hence, aristocracies are so indolent that they achieve very little in business, government, the church, literature, or science. Except as they are dragged along by the advance of the other classes, they stagnate in their saloons, carriages, and opera boxes. And then wealth and rank afford the means, and thereby the temptation, to unlawful indulgence. They raise men above the restraints of public opinion. They enable men to throw such beauty around sin, as will recommend it to consciences lulled or seeking for pretexts. True, high life now is more decorous and virtuous than formerly. But this is because advancing civilization equalizes society, and so intermingles its different classes, that the middle one, in return for the elegance that it shares more and more with high life, bestows on the latter an exotic vigor. Aristocracies are polished in manner and refined in taste, frequently they are brave and generous, but it is their characteristic spirit to hold labor to be vulgar, to prefer the past to the present, and display to solidity.

On the other hand, the pauper class are too depressed or too bad for labor. The State gives them no chances of rising, or, if any, they will throw them away. Consequently, they have no hope; and despair makes no effort. They are both idle and improvident. Neglected by society, because it acts too exclusively on the competitive, "laissez faire" principle, they grow up in gross ignorance. Accustomed only to vicious associations, their very friends and homes make them worse. In the very centres of European and Anglo-Saxon enlightenment, are thousands of forlorn creatures whose only

sensibility is wretchedness; whose only solace is the excitement of sin, or the callousness of long suffering; who are industrious only in beggary and law breaking; who know nothing of society but its neglects, its evils, and its punishments; whose homes are the street, the grogshop, or the hospital; whose whole life is like a cold, rainy day. The existence of such a class indicates not only personal depravity, but that the social body is organized imperfectly. Their increase would portend social decay. The first duty of society, is, to these, at once its dread, its shame, and its problem. We waste millions on armies, powder, and epaulettes; it were better to use our millions in teaching and Christianizing the poor, in giving them, not enervating largesses, but the motives, means, and rewards of industry.

There are some curious coincidences between the pauper and aristocratic classes. The one never exists without the other. Palaces and hovels are commonly in juxtaposition. Wherever there are lords, beggars jostle them in the streets. The lowest class are the most obsequious to aristocracy, because it dazzles the eye, and scatters crumbs under its table. And aristocracy, in return, does a great deal to fill up the ranks of pauperism. In times of jar and disorganization, the first and third classes have sometimes joined in a motley alliance against the second; rags and velvets against the toil that weaves them both. Aristocracy and pauperism increase together, until, having absorbed every other class, and standing unsupported like pillars in a desert, they both tumble into ruin; or decrease together, until both are swallowed in an Icarian equality.

But now the middle class, while it is under the necessity of laboring, has also chances and prospects. Hence, it engrosses nearly all the industry of a nation. It

boasts the brawny, stalwart men that fell the forest, sow the seed, speed the plough, and gather the harvest; that robe our plains in verdure, and festoon our hills with vines; that drag from the mines that servant of all work, the iron, and the black diamonds that blaze in our grates; that steer our ships to every harbor, float our thirty-starred flag in every breeze, and pour into our laps the luxuries of every clime; that wield the hammers and saws, and make our towns ring with the cheerful noises of mechanic handicraft; that drive the factories, and ply the yardstick, and load the counter with the triumphs of industrial art; that discover new channels of commerce, invent new machinery and processes for facilitating production, and augment capital by new investments; that furnish the houses we live in, and the clothes we wear, and the victuals we eat, and the roads we travel. The steamboat and the locomotive, the cotton-gin and the power-loom, the telegraph that harnesses the lightning, and the daguerreotype that imprisons the light, are proofs of the buoyant and manifold energies of the popular classes.

And, for like reasons, these classes do far the most in enlarging science, perfecting art, and speeding the progress of thought. If not the Mæcenases and Medicis, they are the intellectual workers. From them have sprung the geniuses, the lords of mind, the great thinkers, the vastly learned, the master artists, the magnates of the republic of letters. The Homers and Shakspeares of poetry; the Lockes, Coleridges, and Kants of philosophy; the Newtons, and Hunters, and Davys of science; the Luthers, and Butlers, and Barrows of theology; the Angelos, and Raphaels, and Rubenses of art; the Peels, and Guizots, and Clays, and Websters of statesmanship; the Eldons and Storys of law; the Cromwells, Napoleons,

and Washingtons of the field and cabinet alike;—although these are nature's nobility and the aristocracy of intellect, they were originally but commoners in the State. The great body of the votaries of knowledge, the theorists, projectors, discoverers, and inventors; the intellectual file leaders, the teachers that drudge in our schoolhouses, the professors in our colleges, the editors, reviewers, and authors; the brain-coiners that keep up the sparkling array of newspapers, magazines, and books; that create new views of truth, ideals of beauty, and stirring thoughts for common mankind; the lawyers, that administer justice, and the divines that expound religion; the popular leaders, that, by the prerogative of eloquence and foresight, make our speeches, and frame our laws, and shape our policy, and marshal our armies, and forge out the facts that make history,—such men are not reared in marble halls; they do not trace lordly lineages; they are the children of the people, and must needs, at least in earlier life, alloy their empyrean gifts with the vulgarity of caring for bread and butter. And the aggregate thought and conscience of the people, is that potent public opinion which armies dare not resist, of which kings are vassals, and governments the organ.

The middle class cannot command all the means and charms of sin. They are in the centre of the influences of public opinion. They have characters and opportunities to lose. The home, with its firesides and loves, is their characteristic abode. Consequently, it is they chiefly, that honor and cherish such homely virtues as conjugal fidelity, filial affection, honesty, and friendship. And they are proportionately the most liberal; for moderate competency is near enough to want to feel for it, and to be often asked by it. Their prosperity is mutually intertwined with that of their country; and accord-

ingly, their patriotism enshrines country as the cynosure of all glorious reminiscences, yields a trusty allegiance to its sovereignty, rallies at its minute call, and dies in its defence. Often, when nobility has danced servile attendance on the invader, the commons, by their uncalculating persistence, have redeemed the soil. Indeed, as long as they stand steady, there never can be successful invasion or successful rebellion. And they are the natural support of rational religion. Their common sense corrects extravagance; their independence resists the undue domination of creeds and clergy; and their ingrained sense of right keeps up the standard of Christian morals. A class, at once the most industrious, intelligent, and religious, must be the happiest. In the golden medium of the social state, one is in a natural position; not griped by poverty, manacled by etiquette, or petrified by grandeur. His staid simplicity may be less imposing than the parade of high life, and more monotonous than the pathetic adventures of low life, but he dwells by the very sources of happiness—home, nature, and freedom.

From all this it appears that, in proportion to the character, and extent, and power of the middle classes, will be a nation's prosperity. One made up only of an aristocracy and its destitute dependents, would be a monstrous anomaly; all head and limbs without a body. Such a patchwork of jewels and tatters would either fall to pieces by its own weight, or be blown into dust by the first rude puff of war. But the middle class is the very core of a nation's life; it is at once the soul and the body; the brains, the heart, the blood, and the hands. It is the framework of the building; aristocracy is but the entablature, pauperism the rubbish about the foundation. The growth of this central order is, therefore, the growth of the entire state in freedom, plenty, power, and



happiness. When all other classes are so lost in this one that wealth is pretty equally distributed, all pursuits held in the same esteem, and property neither monopolized by or withheld from any portion of the community, that community will have approached perfection. There would be a true equality; for, although there would be various modes of life, yet all would have equal chances to labor, and to be paid for it. Many would be rich, but the very richest class would be so small, and its members would be so continually coming from, and returning to, and related with all the rest, that men would rank not so much by outward circumstance, as by real merit. Thus, there would be no invidious distinctions; for the rich would only be first in one respect, among equals or superiors in other respects. Some would be poor enough; but, instead of being disdained or neglected, they would be treated as brethren whose fortunes must be retrieved, or whose helplessness must be assisted. And the predominance of the middle class is the enfranchisement of all. For the all-embracing class would be too mighty to be ruled except as they chose, and too numerous to allow any monopoly of advantages. And even the poorest, being always connected by business and relationship with the body of the people, would be sure to participate in the common liberty. And where all are equal and free, mutual ties and common interests will produce reciprocity and fraternity. In war, a people thus free, equal, and brotherly, would form armies obedient indeed to discipline, because a spontaneous loyalty is most faithful, and yet they would be instinct with one life, like organic bodies; they would be intelligent and enthusiastic, and therefore invincible. Such armies have given to fame the fields of Sempach, and Morgarten, and Marengo, and Bunker Hill, and

Saratoga, and Lundy's Lane, and New Orleans, and Buena Vista. Such a people, whether they range the sands of Arabia, the mountains of Switzerland, the plains of Hungary, or the valleys of North America, may be defeated, but never conquered.

And this gigantic preponderance of the middle classes would produce the highest material prosperity. Not only the necessity for laboring, but the equal opportunities, the unrestrained flow and abundance of the rewards of labor, would stimulate competition. Every one would be a worker in mind or body. Efforts would be directed to every promising end. Every faculty of man would be developed. Every material thing would be transmuted into an instrument of progress. Fire, earth, air, and water, would be explored, and made prolific in treasure, convenience, knowledge, and beauty. Every acre would be cultivated, every river navigated, every mountain delved; every mechanical art would be plied to maturity; manufactures would be at once exquisite and cheap; commerce would clothe all in purple and feed them with spices; cities would stretch their swarming streets, and raise their mansions, along every freighted water, and the land would be thronged with embowered villages, and a teeming population.

Corresponding to all this, there would be a vast intellectual activity. Education would be cheap and universal. The freedom of mind would evolve all its powers. Schoolhouses would stand at every street corner, and at every road crossing. Periodicals and books would load every table. Universities, lyceums, and learned societies would engage not only the years of youth, but the leisure of all. Literature would be natural, national, varied, and powerful. Science would extend its researches to all the secrets of nature. Although aristocracies have

munificently patronized genius, yet, because the tastes of middle life are unsophisticated, they are true, and therefore genius would have an ample field for its massive proportions. The grandeurs of architecture would be receptacles for masterpieces of art. Religion, if not established, would yet be national. Differences of opinion would repress fanaticism, and put life into formalism. Public virtues would be unalloyed with public crimes. Simplicity, order, benevolence, and patriotism, would combine and expand into a national character.

All this may seem a highly colored picture. It never has been realized yet. And the imperfections of actual life may always keep the reality below the description. But the law of national grandeur just elucidated is confirmed by all history. As the plebeians gradually achieved privileges and consideration, and attempered patrician arrogance and softness with their iron independence and vigor, Rome grew to be mistress of the world. At her fall, her lands had been engrossed by rich proprietors, and were worked by slaves. Poland was inhabited only by nobles and serfs, and hence she was easily dismembered. In Ireland, out of a population of eight millions, only a few thousands own the land, and more than three millions are starving. Hence, in that loved and blasted isle, treason to the Saxon is nothing but allegiance to God. In France, the Revolution of 1789 divided property minutely. Hence the phenomena of 1848-9. Her National Guard steady the progress of a barricade revolution, so that it is quite orderly and bloodless. Her "bourgeoisie" control the elections, and show that radical transformations may take place without war. England has always been more or less free, because her Saxon knights, and burgesses, and franklins, and yeomanry were always strong and self-respecting. The decrease

of her small freeholders is the darkest presage in her complicated condition.

The United States are little more than a large middle class. The privilege of one is that of all. The officeholders dare be nothing but your humble servant. They never let the public catch them taking airs. The educated and virtuous are too scattered among different sects, parties, pursuits, and States, to be exclusive in their intercourse, or to unite on any symbols of superiority. Indeed, an aristocracy consisting only or mainly of the best and wisest, is but a speculation of philosophy, or a poetic fantasy. And few Americans can climb high on a genealogical tree. It will do for a Percy or a Plantagenet, a Montmorenci or a Bourbon, a Braganza or a Hapsburg, to make much of his ancestry; because it is from five hundred to a thousand years old, and then he has not much else to boast of. But should any of us *yesterday* Occidentals, blurt his pedigree at St. James, or Schoenbrunn, or the Escorial, the grandees and heralds there would soon take the starch out of his republican pretensions. And although many of us roll pills, or concoct pleas, or measure calicoes and sugars, yet only a shallow brain would regard these occupations as more respectable than any harder use of the fingers given us by the Mechanic of the universe. There are a few, however, who assume the exclusive, by putting the long purse in the place of education, rank, and polish. This is the "Upper Tendom" that reposes itself on cotton bales, tons of iron, and barrels of pork; its genealogy is a ledger or a cash-book; its escutcheon is a bank note. These barons of the dollar are reduced to commonalty not by bills of attainder, but by the "insolvent act." But although we have no aristocracy in the common sense, yet there are social eminences. Many reach high positions by their energy

and worth; many unite renown and modesty, wealth and goodness, industry and elegance. And yet there is a microscopic sanctimoniousness, and an obtrusive "sansculottism," that would destroy social varieties, and crib life within their own bald conceptions and five-penny-bit expenditure. But away with that hyperborean rigidity which would freeze up the freshness and flowers of life, and pluck the feathers from the angels' wings. Nature is made of roses as well as of cabbages, emeralds as well as pebbles. Beauty tinges the sky, variegates the earth, and beams from the face; fragrance breathes in the air; music floats on the wind, murmurs in the waters, and rustles in the leaves. God has made the ornamental as well as the useful, the brilliant as well as the solid. He has, accordingly, gifted us not only with physical and moral, but with æsthetic faculties. If the former two have the first claim, yet, when money is plenty, let it be largely used to improve the latter. We ought to cultivate not only virtue, but manners; not only conscience, but taste; not only knowledge, but sensibility. The fine arts and their pleasures; the polish of exalted intercourse; the exquisiteness of a complex civilization, that grace of life which, though sometimes perverted to set off vice, is yet the natural ally of virtue; these are at once proofs and means of progress; by attracting all upwardly, they increase equality; they idealize democracy.

But while aristocracy is rare with us, so is pauperism. The most of this is the refuse of European immigration. We are quite strangers to social extremes. Coronets, coats of arms, and liveries are swept to the moths, with other feudal absurdities. The only titles are "sir," "mister," "squire," "captain," or "general." The only sovereign is the voter. The only sceptre is a ballot or a

pen. The only throne is an editor's chair, or the stump. And, alas! for the bathos of the fact, the only test of manhood is a—white skin. Every family has its poor and rich relations or associates. The children of the millionaire may have to dig coal for a living. And the ragged boy that paddles in the gutters to-day, may, in a few years, be the leading politician, the most extensive manufacturer, or the President of the Union. The election day is the very sabbath of equality. In a word, the middle class not only rules all, but *is* all.

Hence it is, that we are so unparalleled in prosperity. Hence it is, that a government, not so much of force as of suasion, maintains infinitely better order than the grenadiers of Prussia, the cannon of Radetski, and the Cossacks of Nicholas. Hence it is, that we already imitate the military glories of France, rival the naval prowess of Britain, and exceed the conquests of Rome. Hence it is, that the tides of Anglo-Saxon energy and freedom are pouring all over the continent, and the Mississippi valley is blooming to be the garden of the world. Hence it is, that the "Universal Yankee Nation" is exploring the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, the rivers of Oregon, and the mines of California; and, from the shores of the Pacific, confronts and startles the slumbering civilization of Asia. Hence it is, that our progress is upward as the eagle, rapid as steam, beneficent as the sunshine, and majestic as the march of "an army with banners." Some one says, This is a great country, if it were only fenced in! Why, it will be fenced very soon, by the roar of the Atlantic, the wastes of the Pacific, the snows that hide the North Pole, and a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama!

The embryo formation of the middle classes was the birth of modern time. Their increase and improvement

is the progress itself of modern civilization. Their ascendancy distinguishes the nineteenth century. The merchants of the Italian republics, the burghers of the Hanse towns and Imperial cities, the guilds and commons of England, first undermined feudalism. And for some centuries past, the trading, farming, mechanic, and learned orders, have been steadily gaining on royalty, nobility, and hierarchy; so that these are straitly besieged by public opinion, and are now fighting for sheer existence. But though kings may combine, ministries contrive, parties counter-check, and legislatures disappoint; though ultraists may retard what they would hasten; though the blood of insurgents may redden the streets of Paris, the hills of Rome, the squares of Berlin, the shores of the Danube, and the valleys of the Rhine; though time be bewildered in a labyrinth of revolutions, reactions, diplomacy, and wars,—still, Hope is the true philosophy. Ideas will vanquish armies. The musty institutions based only on tradition will be packed into the wareroom of the antiquary, and be succeeded by living forms. And when the *one* and the *few* are lost in the *many*, so that civilization has been *republicanized*, then the pauper and debased classes will loom on the world's attention. They begin to do so now. And when society feels that it is not fraternal enough; when, as God's vicegerent, it finds work for all, and bread for all that will work; trains the children of the poorest; tends the disabled, and reclaims the vicious; then will republicanism be elevated to *social democracy*. Then will civilization work its most momentous problems to an affirmative issue. Then will history tell of what time has *constructed*. Then will philosophy and life coincide, and reality be grander than poetic visions. Then will religion be the soul of society, and society the thousand-

fold expression of religion. Then will all classes, all opinions, all occupations, and all characters, like sound members of a healthy body, be assimilated into one organic, free, equal, and fraternal commonwealth.









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